

**SPECIAL MEETING
BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN**

April 15, 2002

6:00 PM

Mayor Baines called the special meeting to order.

Mayor Baines called for the Pledge of Allegiance, this function being led by Alderman Shea.

A moment of silent prayer was observed.

The Clerk called the roll. There were fourteen Aldermen present.

Present: Aldermen Wihby, Gatsas, Guinta, Sysyn, Osborne, Pinard, O’Neil,
Lopez, Shea, DeVries, Garrity, Smith, Thibault, Forest

Mayor Baines advises that the purpose of the special meeting is discussion with the School Superintendent Search Committee’s consulting firm of NESDEC. I’d like to introduce the Vice-Chairman of the Board of School Committee, Leslee Stewart who will introduce our guest.

Vice-Chairman Stewart stated I’d like to introduce to you the gentleman on my left, Tom Behan and the gentleman on my right, Gary Baker who are consultants working with the Superintendent Search Committee from NESDEC. You may remember NESDEC because they were the group that worked with us a few years ago to do an analysis of our buildings in the City prior to the Parsons-Brinkerhoff analysis they did.

Mayor Baines interjected it’s the New England School Development Council.

Vice-Chairman Stewart stated I just want to update you at this moment in time and bring you some information on the Superintendent search process. About eight weeks ago we formed a search committee, a community search committee who have been working together on and off over that period of time to identify those traits that we are looking for in a Superintendent, to advertise for a new Superintendent of Schools and that group is charged with looking at resumes and determining which individuals will be interviewed in the Superintendent’s search process. Our timing is such that the posting process will end at the end of this month. On May 1st the Superintendent Search Committee will review applications, make a cut at that point and determine which applicant’s we’d like to talk to further and those who we will cordially thank for their interest and following that a very tight schedule in the month of May culminating in the selection of a Superintendent at the end of the month. The process that you are about to go through tonight is a focus group process,

groups like yours, the School Board, parents in the community, community leaders, department chairs, administrative heads, principals, teachers are all going through the same process that you'll go through this evening and that is to help our Search Committee identify what our community is looking for in a new Superintendent of Schools and also help the individual once he or she is selected to look forward six to 12 months and say what are the most important issues pressing us as a School District so that we can get forward on the business of running and operating and educating children in the City of Manchester. So, I thank you very much for your time this evening. I'm going to excuse myself because I have to go onto another meeting and these able gentlemen will take it from here and I thank you and I'll see you later this week.

Mr. Behan stated good evening and thank you very much for having us appear before you. My name is Tom Behan. I am a retired administrator having spent 37 years in public education, perhaps 30 of them as a building based administrator. The last two years as Head Master of a private school in Massachusetts and I've worked with NESDEC off and on for a period of time. The opportunity to appear before you is a very important one. NESDEC has had 50 years of experience working with school communities, school committees in many different ways... search consulting is one aspect of NESDEC, there's professional development, enrollment projections, building analysis, program reviews, professional development...a whole host of things. Our prime purpose for being in Manchester is as stated...we're assisting with the search process for a new Superintendent of Schools. We're excited with the opportunity to be able to push ahead and work ahead with you, with community representatives. On a personal note it's a pleasure to be back in Manchester after having not visited the community for a number of years and I told the story and I'll be very brief, but it's sort of a fun thing because I think some of you remember it. Haverhill and Manchester had a very interesting relationship in football for many years on Thanksgiving day and I coached [when I was much younger] and we were playing Manchester in the late 60's and were leading 3 to 0 with about two minutes left in the game and we called time out. We had a State Championship at stake and we told our quarterback and punter to make sure that they kicked the ball out-of-bounds and not kick it to that guy at the other end of the field. We ended up kicking it to Steve Schubert, he ran it back probably 65 yards, Manchester beat Haverhill 6 to 3 and we lost the State Championship, but that's what happened. I just shared that because it brought back some good memories and bad memories too. We've got a task tonight that my colleague will share with you and explain to you...we need your input, this is an important undertaking, one that should be very positive for a community and we're looking forward to it.

Mr. Baker stated I'm Gary Baker, I just recently retired from the Superintendency in Hingham, Mass where I was for ten years and before that I was an Assistant Superintendent of Schools in Acton, Mass but I am a native of New Hampshire. I'm a graduate of Keene High School and went to the University of New Hampshire and after spending a good deal of time, probably too much time in Massachusetts I'm now back in New Hampshire retired on a

lake in Wakefield and am enjoying the process of helping school districts particularly in New England, but throughout New England, find either head masters or principals or superintendents. Part of the process that we think is critical in making it ultimately a successful process is involving the key people in the process of getting input from the community, as a whole, and from important people in the community and obviously the Board of Aldermen are very important in terms of the success of a school system especially the school system here in Manchester. This is a forward looking process. By that we mean we want you to let us know what you think is needed for the City of Manchester in terms of two things: the qualities of the Superintendent, the skills, the attributes, the experiences that you think a Superintendent in Manchester should have. We'll give you an opportunity to tell us in as brief a way as you can what those qualities are. Tom will jot down those qualities on our cards here. After everyone has had an opportunity to tell us what are the most important qualities then we will give you an opportunity to reflect on what everybody has said and make an argument for what you think are the most important ones of all of the ones that have been mentioned. Maybe the four or five most critical qualities that you think we should be looking for in a Superintendent. The second phase of this process is to ask you to tell us what tasks need to be accomplished by a new Superintendent or need to be at least addressed actively in the first six to eight months of that person being on the job. What are the most important issues that need to be addressed and again we'll give you an opportunity to argue for what is most critical in that process of determining what their most important tasks are. We hope that you will feel free to give us some insight into what the School Committee and the Search Committee should be looking for, the kinds of questions that should be asked from the qualities to make sure that we nail down those qualities that a person does or does not have that you think are important and the tasks that need to be achieved. This whole process with eight different groups that we're meeting with will lead to a report from the New England School Development Council essentially written by Tom and me to the School Board and to the Search Committee so that they know what the community has been saying about what the qualities are that the Superintendent should have, what the tasks are, what the Superintendent should address and we think this will be a very useful document. It might be helpful for you not only to know what you as a group but also to hear what parents are saying, about what teachers are saying, what administrators are saying throughout the community about the priorities. So, we'd like to begin that process by asking you to tell us what are the most important qualities that we should be seeking in a Superintendent?

Mayor Baines stated also we have some department heads who have been invited here as well for their input as well, so we would like to involve them.

Mr. Baker stated so every once-in-a-while we should turn around to make sure that you people have had an opportunity to give input as well.

Alderman O'Neil stated I'm not sure if it's a quality or an attribute but I happen to be by the McLaughlin School last Friday and I happen to note that it listed the many great things that

Henry McLaughlin did here and, Mayor, maybe you may be able to back me up on this but one of the things it said he was Superintendent from 1970 to 1985, is that correct.

Mayor Baines replied correct.

Alderman O'Neil stated what I recall those were my younger days but there was a lot of stability in the district then because we had a long-time serving Superintendent and I guess again I don't know if it's an attribute or a quality, but certainly, hopefully someone that is committed to Manchester long-term and it's not a stepping stone to move onto a district bigger than Manchester maybe they end up retiring here and that's my comment.

Alderman Garrity stated number one in my mind is to be sure that the new Superintendent has fiscal accountability and there going through the process to be sure that the candidate hasn't run deficits and things of that nature. Number two is public relations...make sure that the new Superintendent has a good public relations background, is able to convey messages to the public and carry forward on those.

Alderman Thibault stated my thing is that we seem to be constantly in a quandary between the two committees...between the Board of Mayor and Aldermen and the School Committee as to...we never seem to be able to get the right answer. We get an answer but three months down the road it's changed completely and they're going to be out of money six months before time, so I think that leads into the question that Alderman Garrity just brought up about fiscal accountability. To me this seems to be the biggest problem with this Board. Every year we seem to end up a million dollars and then some over budget constantly. Why is it that they cannot bring their...and if they do have a problem why don't they come back to this Board and make them aware before it gets to be a crisis. I think that's one of the biggest problems I have with the School Committee.

Mr. Baker stated so you also want somebody who is very good at communicating where the Committee stands in terms of its budget.

Alderman Thibault replied exactly.

Alderman Shea stated someone that solves problems. A problem solver is very essential, someone that faced with certain tasks can be able to come up with creative solutions to problems and be able to handle emergencies as they exist because being a complex system with many different strands running through it that person has to be able to solve several different problems at almost the same time.

Alderman Lopez stated there are three people in the City of Manchester that I feel has everything that a CEO or a Superintendent should have and that's Mike Hickey, Mike Whitney and Kevin Dillon. They have the communication skills, they have the expertise and

they communicate which you've already mentioned. I think one of the major problems being two bodies and I don't know how to solve that and I don't think just off the cuff we would solve it here tonight is if the relationship between both Boards and the Superintendent that is selected could communicate with this board without being criticized by his own board and so that the communication line is open...I don't know how you get around that, that's an authority structure type thing, but I think the biggest thing is sometime that maybe like in the past the Superintendent might agree but the board don't agree and, therefore, the process doesn't really fall in line. But, those three individuals I mentioned seem to encounter all kinds of problems and work through their problems...one of the major things we just had which was the outage and Mike Hickey took charge as CEO and did a fantastic job. When a problem arises we need the individual to take charge, not the elected officials take charge.

Mr. Baker stated so you want somebody who will facilitate communications among the boards and through the City.

Alderman Smith stated this is nice and simple. Call it the "Ace" Program...three things I think everybody's looking for on this Board: accountability, communication and education.

Alderman Shea stated this is an important trait in any interrelations and it's a sense of humor or being able to somehow or other if there is tension to be able to take that tension out of the air, I'm not too good at it, but some are much better at it than I and that's very essential and I think that the person also and it may reiterate what Alderman Smith said but you have to select a person who is intelligent, who has the know how and academia to be a little bit more aware of circumstances and situations and present input in a leadership type of a role.

Mr. Baker stated but someone who is able to reduce tensions among groups with a sense of humor is an important factor. Most Superintendents, I know from personal experience, and those Superintendents feel they could not survive if they did not have a sense of humor.

Alderman Pinard stated you need a Superintendent that can get along with the teachers. I've noticed in the past few years that there seems to be a lack of understanding between certain individuals on the two boards and I think this one avenue with communication should be addressed.

Mr. Baker stated we're meeting with 40 teachers tomorrow and I suspect we may hear the same thing from those teachers.

Mayor Baines asked are there any department heads who would like to comment.

Ms. Laurel Bucino from the Office of Youth Services asked are we on tasks yet?

Mr. Baker replied no, not yet, we'll get there.

Mr. Kevin Sheppard from the Highway Department stated we're a little bit biased because we're responsible for the maintenance of the schools, so we would like to see a Superintendent that can balance the maintenance of the schools as well as the educational needs of the schools. We feel that the maintenance of the facilities is important to the education process and I think communication was a good one. The ability to maintain good working relationships with other departments within the City.

Mr. Ron Ludwig from the Parks, Recreation & Cemetery Department stated I'd just like to say that anything I'm going to say is not being prefaced by the person that's in there now, so I hope that it's not taken that way, but...

Mr. Baker stated again the stress should be what we're planning for the future.

Mr. Ludwig stated and that's why we're here. Given the complexity of the Superintendent of Schools job in Manchester we're fully aware that he is not able to meet with you at all times to discuss certain issues whether it be athletics or whatever, if there was better communication as it relates just to appointing a person we could speak to on a more regular basis that would be well-appreciated and I think would go along way to serve the City much better.

Chief Joe Kane from the Fire Department stated my biggest concern is for the safety of kids in the schools. I think that one of the questions that you really need to ascertain is to what level of safety the individual is aspiring to, the level of safety that we enjoy here in the schools is quite high and we, as a City, in the past have always put that safety at a high level. When I say safety there are a number of things. I'll give you an example, we had an incident a few years ago where there was some paint that was spilled and some of the kids were getting ill and there was hysteria with about 25 kids transported to the hospital. Someone able to take charge of that type of thing and say okay let's calm down, let's get organized and handle the problem. So, I speak towards fire safety, but more in general of crisis situations at schools.

Chief Mark Driscoll of the Manchester Police Department stated I'm pleased to tell you that we have a spectacular relationship with the School District now. Like Chief Kane we have a very strong presence as a result of the support of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen...I have ten people that work daily in the schools and the schools are probably visited by another ten people. We've always enjoyed a terrific, open working relationship...access is very, very important to us...public safety while all the kids are in school is at the highest level as far as we're concerned. We need not only access but we need communications, it's just of the greatest importance and we've enjoyed that communication to date so we're looking for somebody that philosophically puts public safety on the highest plateau and really works to support that.

Mayor Baines stated I'd like to just add a few things to the list. Somebody who is student oriented, very comfortable being around students...this is going to be like A, B, C's to you guys but someone that's comfortable being around students and involving students. Someone who is very strong at team building and you heard some of that today. Not only amongst the educational establishment from the community at-large, somebody that's able to go out...Alderman O'Neil mentioned Henry McLaughlin who I had the opportunity to work with as a young principal and also as a School Board Member in the 70's. He was a master at team building and reaching across the boards. Dealing with the Board of School Committee, the Mayor and the Aldermen. Someone who was very comfortable doing that. He was probably the consummate political Superintendent that we've ever had but also being a great leader because he had those skills in the community. Someone who is an educational leader, someone who can stand in front of teachers and talk about accountability, talk about reading strategies, talk about testing strategies, someone that can talk about professional development and the way to deliver a good education to students. Someone that knows the issues of education, how to bring strong accountability that knows what's happening in the world of testing, in particular. As you know, our state just like every other state is involved in accountability...our State Supreme Court recently focused in on that. We have not had, in this School District, someone who really understands the importance of testing and how to bring consensus around raising test scores and adapting and aligning curriculum with testing standards. So, somebody who really knows education, who's been there. Also, someone...I heard about strong fiscal management. Now, obviously, a Superintendent that's had some experience in a school system, a large school system that has had to manage budgets and has had to assemble a team with strong fiscal management capabilities because oftentimes the focus of educational discussions in Manchester are focused on fiscal issues as opposed to some of the other issues that I just alluded to earlier. Someone who had demonstrated in their prior situation...they've got very involved in the community. Someone who is comfortable within the community whether it be in a very social or a business formats or different organizations within the community that shows a commitment to the community and is visible in the community among the various constituencies that we talked about and I guess that goes with the area of high visibility...someone that is very comfortable being in the public and interacting with parents and business leaders and people in the political establishment that is very comfortable engaging in dialogue with people both formally and informally and even at a moment's notice about the importance of education and what needs to be done. So, that's my list so far.

Alderman Shea asked do you want the second part.

Mr. Baker stated I just want to make sure that everybody has had an opportunity to talk about the qualities of the Superintendent and also if anyone who has heard all of these comments would like to argue for certain ones of them be given higher priority than others because they're critical in your own minds.

Mayor Baines stated I think fiscal responsibility would be the one that most of the people would be talking about from here...fiscal management.

Mr. Baker stated fiscal management is the highest priority or among the highest priorities of the ones that have been mentioned. Anything else? It seemed to me I heard a number of people say how important it was to facilities communications and be a good communicator.

Mr. Baker stated we could then move onto the second phase of this process which has to do with...imagine the new Superintendent coming on board, probably mid-summer before school starts certainly and you're sitting down with that Superintendent what would you advise that Superintendent to focus on in the first six to eight months in terms of getting something done that needs to get done in the Manchester schools for the Manchester students. What are the most important issues that need to be addressed?

Alderman DeVries stated I would think it's important for the vision for the School District to be defined. We're entering into possibly a long-term contract with our tuition towns, we're also looking at possibly expanding the current infrastructure, additional high school, but these things are all unclear and need to be formed and take shape this summer, if not partially they will be going into the summer. But, somebody who can determine the vision for the School District, for the City...a long-term vision.

Alderman Garrity stated I think one of the biggest tasks that the new Superintendent is going to have to face is getting their fiscal house in order; that is going to be a huge, huge task.

Alderman Shea stated probably these are detailed things but I'd like to see the Superintendent concentrate on phonetic instruction rather than other types or like language or so forth. Grouping of individuals...I'd like to see that come back in terms of segregating those that are talented and gifted vis-à-vis those that need extra help and things of that nature and I'd like that program to be started at a lower level, possibly the 3rd or 4th grades rather than waiting until maybe they have advanced placement at the high school level. Foreign languages, I think, is a must today and I think that that should be introduced possibly at the 1st or 2nd grade. I'd like to see consistency of instruction. I think that we have, in Manchester, a situation whereby we have a certain type of instruction at the elementary and at the senior level but we have a different type of instruction at the middle school level which is discombobulating to many and the way children are separated today has probably been somewhat of a problem because of the fact that a lot of people have been taken out of the elementary and placed in the middle school without any training and so forth. There are other...

Mr. Baker stated so you would like to make sure that the Superintendent facilitates transitions between the grade levels.

Alderman Shea replied better than it has been done, yes, and I think that there isn't a consistency at the senior high level. I think Mr. Baines having been a principal can address that better than I but I think there's inconsistency among the high schools in terms of the advanced placement or whatever it's called and also I think that it was pointed out too as far as when children are placed in terms of graduations...there's weighted and unweighted...I think that should be addressed, that's a real problem at the senior high level...weighting of grades...I think that that has to be addressed. So, those are the few thoughts that I have.

Mayor Baines interjected if that could all be done within the first five to ten days...we'd find that very helpful.

Mr. Baker stated we'll see if we can handle that, find somebody that can handle it.

Mr. Baker stated Tom would like to have you explain that last one you just stated.

Alderman Shea stated at the high school level there are certain children that take weighted...probably calculus and others that may take intermediate math...

Mr. Baker asked that's given few quality points?

Alderman Shea replied yes.

Mayor Baines asked are there any other questions or comments from the Aldermen or department heads?

Mr. Baker stated you had some tasks that you wanted addressed.

Ms. Bucino stated we see a lot of youth at the Office of Youth Services who aren't quite making it in the regular school, they have some special needs, they're not special education students so they don't fall under that, but they could use some alternative programming and there isn't too much at this point in Manchester. Sometimes a smaller class, fewer hours can help them transition and keep them from dropping out and also earlier access to vocational education could benefit some youth who don't quite make it into the School of Technology because most of the programming is for juniors and seniors.

Mr. Baker asked are you suggesting that it be moved back to freshman and sophomores.

Ms. Bucino stated to have something to hook in kids before they drop out in the vocational area.

Chief Driscoll stated I think that with everything that's been said here tonight the Superintendent is going to have a pretty full plate but I think in order to accomplish most of that he has to be a person that really has some human relation skills and can develop the trust and confidence, I think our teachers do a wonderful job, they're very, very dedicated people, but that person has to have the leadership to bring all of that together, so I guess that would be my task within the six months to bring everybody together and develop a real strong team that can work together and I think the vision and all of the goals will come once that's accomplished.

Mr. Baker asked are there any other tasks?

Alderman Shea stated I think one other point that just occurred to me is it's not only the Superintendent that leads a school he has to depend upon other people particularly as alluded to by Alderman Pinard (i.e., teachers, principals), but also high administered personnel as well and I think that it's incumbent that that person has the cooperation of the School Board in terms of his selections. In other words, we've all been in education and we sometimes have run into political situations as it were and I think that this is...a person has to be selected on the basis of that person's ability to say look, I want to select this person as my assistant superintendent or this person in charge and have the cooperation of the School Board and not have them have a candidate in mind that they want to place in that particular position. So, I'm not sure how that works but I think that's to the School Board members in terms of if you want a fellow to do a job whether he's the manager of the Red Sox or somebody that's coaching the Bruin's or anybody else he has to be able to select the people that he's kind of comfortable working with and not inherit a particular group of people that he has sort of reformed to suit his particular situation.

Mayor Baines stated obviously this Superintendent will have the unique situation and the ability to hire an Assistant Superintendent for Secondary and in all likelihood in elementary as well. So, it is a unique situation that the new Superintendent will have. So, any closing comments.

Mr. Baker stated a part of the process that NESDEC goes through is the recruiting process and we will try our hardest, Tom and I, to take the initiative to go out and seek people. Not just people who respond to ads. We'll seek people who we have heard from various sources, various reliable sources are outstanding educators, outstanding communicators, outstanding budgeters, and call them up and say Manchester has a lot to offer how about considering applying to Manchester. I would encourage all of you to let Tom or me know, call the NESDEC office and let us know that you would like to make some suggestions as to people that should be contacted. If you've heard about a great superintendent or a great assistant superintendent in some other part of the country or in your brother's home town in Connecticut who is raving about a great superintendent, call us up and we'll give that person a ring and see if we can encourage them to come to Manchester.

Mayor Baines stated I would urge you finally to try to look at someone who's has urban experience. I think that's critical, it's just one voice in the subject because I'm sure as both of you gentlemen know it's a different world than city superintendency as opposed to some of the towns, no disrespect to that, but it is a different environment, it's a different political environment, it's an overall different set of skills that are brought to urban school administrations whether it be on the building or the central office level. So, I hope that in that mix we have someone that brings that kind of experience to the table.

Mr. Baker stated we did a mailing [just so that you know this] to 80 superintendents who are superintendents in districts of 10,000 or more students...mailing in New England and New York and New Jersey, just to share that with you. That is something we did back several weeks ago.

This being a special meeting, no further business was presented and on motion of Alderman Garrity, duly seconded by Alderman Thibault, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

City Clerk